Sketch of the Character

OF

Abraham Lincoln,

BY

Augustus Woodbury.

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OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN:

A

DISCOURSE

PREACHED IN THE WESTMINSTER CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1865,

BY

AUGUSTUS WOODBURY.

PROVIDENCE.
SIDNEY S. RIDER AND BROTHER.
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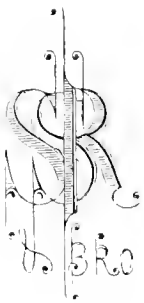

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DISCOURSE.

Rom. XIV. 7.—No man dieth to himself.

THE wave of sorrow that has swept over the American Republic, for the death of its Chief Magistrate, has by no means spent its force. It is now flowing back to us from the old world, bearing so rich and so complete a burden of sympathy and appreciation as almost to induce the feeling that we knew not the entire worth of him whom we have lost. The indications are too clear and unmistakable to deceive us. The expressions of affection and esteem which have been made, both at home and abroad, are heartfelt and sincere. Even reluctant lips have spoken the praises of the dead President. Those who once scorned and ridiculed his homely simplicity now acknowledge their mistake, declare their repentance, and are earnest to assure the world that he was better than they thought. Certainly the man who has evoked such unanimous approval must have been no ordinary man. It was natural that our own people, in their gratitude for what he has done for them, should weave a chaplet for his tomb: that, in their profound sense of bereavement, they should bow with deepest sorrow, as they felt that he was taken from them for-

ever. Surely, this man was the most cordially beloved, the most widely respected of any man within the borders of the Republic. The rich and the poor, the wise and the simple, the scholar and the unlettered seem to emulate one another as they unite in paying honor to his memory. Even his foes in arms against him had learned to admire him; and they who fought him shed tears of genuine sorrow when they heard of the fatal deed that struck him out of life. All this, perhaps, was to be expected. But that this plain Republican, bringing an honest heart and a sagacious mind to the direction of public affairs in a time of unexampled difficulty, should so have won over to him the hearts of men throughout the civilized world,—should have so conquered their prejudices, by the sheer and simple force of his upright and truthful character,—should have so closely touched and so completely moved the best part of human nature and of mankind—that was hardly to be hoped. We knew how coldly Europe had looked upon us; how chary of its sympathy, nay, how hostile in its sentiments, it had been. We knew how utterly incongruous with all the preconceptions, the traditional ideas, the long established formalism of European society, our President, and the movement which he represented and which he led, were thought to be. We knew how slow the conventionalism of the old world was to recognize any worth or any ability, except as it bore the stamp of regularity. It was almost too much to believe, that the old world would see with the eye of the new. We thought that we were partial, and that possibly a disinterested judgment, or a judgment that was affected by unfriendly prejudices might reverse our decision, and depreciate our estimate. But as we read

what has been spoken and written on the other side of the ocean, and see with what hearty admiration every word is full, we come near to feeling that even our partiality was not generous enough, and that our estimate of Mr. Lincoln's worth was, after all, too low. Hostile eyes have seen excellences which we were slow to discover, and they, who have refused to be our friends, have spoken words warmer than our own. It is a great triumph which has thus been achieved. It has been bravely won. It will be worthily enjoyed.

The President of the United States has called us together to renew the expression of our grief and to open once again the sources of consolation. It is eminently proper that this day should be set apart for a day of humiliation and prayer. When the intelligence of the terrible misfortune that had overtaken the country, in the murder of Mr. Lincoln, was first brought to us, we were stunned—we were overpowered by the shock. We could not make it real to us. If we ventured upon an expression of our feelings, it was necessarily feeble and broken. Our minds were bewildered by the strange experience. Our hearts were suffused by the emotions of grief which crowded them. We scarcely knew what to say, except as it became the utterance of the perplexing and perplexed sentiments which filled our natures. We could not tell of how much we had been deprived, nor by what means Divine Providence would compensate our loss. We hardly dared to look forward to the future. We hoped, indeed,—for no grief is too severe to expel that sweet visitant from the soul,—yet we hoped with trembling. Now we may look with more calmness and deliberation upon this event. We can judge somewhat of its character. We can perceive the indications of

the results which it promises to work out. We can better understand, and we can more correctly appreciate the character of the illustrious victim himself. We can read more plainly the lessons which the great Ruler of nations and the great Teacher of mankind would illustrate, enforce and apply. God give us grace to speak and to learn with true and faithful hearts!

It is needless now to recite the events of Mr. Lincoln's life. They are familiar to our knowledge. His obscure parentage, his early privations, his struggle with circumstances, his victory over unpropitious influences and his great success in overcoming the difficulties of his career, his brave, honest and hopeful persistence, till the humble laborer became the eloquent advocate, the honored statesman, and the trusted ruler of the most powerful nation of freemen in the world—all these things are well known. What need to recount them, except as the means of perceiving how Providence and events train a man for the greatest and noblest deeds? For looking back over all these years, who now is not ready to say, that Divine Providence was educating this man, in this way, for the prominent part which he had to play in history? Clearly and distinctly can we see the finger of God, in the continuous course of that career which led ABRAHAM LINCOLN to the Presidential chair of the United States. I have, upon former occasions during the progress of the rebellion, spoken of the exceeding good fortune which we enjoyed in having such a ruler at such a crisis in our national life. It was not fortune—it was God who gave him to us, who made him what he was, and enabled him to do what he did for us and for the world. I think that he felt this, to a very great extent; that he believed with all the solemn con-

sciousness of such a faith, that he was an instrument in the hands of Divine Providence for accomplishing a certain important result for the American people. He had no pride in himself. He had but little confidence in his own strength. But he believed in the presence, the help and the inspiration of God, with an almost fatalistic confidence and submissiveness. What was revealed to his conscience as the just and right thing to do, he did; and he did it because he felt that God had made it known to him. I think that you will perceive this implicit faith in the Divine superintendence of affairs among us, in all his State papers and his official correspondence. Yet in all this you find no trace of the enthusiast. His mind always worked calmly and deliberately. His inspiration came to him with the slow movement of an ever-flowing stream, and in no case with the rapidity of a raging torrent. His well poised, evenly balanced reason was as regular in its reception of Divine influences as the tides of ocean beneath the influence of the moon. If he saw the right slowly, when he saw it, he saw it clearly. He saw it as a God-ordained principle. He knew that it must succeed at last, because God was on its side, and was carrying it through to its triumph, by the irresistible impulse of an Omnipotent will!

I look upon this unquestioning faith as the secret of his firmness of purpose and of execution in the work which God had entrusted to his hands. Perhaps we do not appreciate the magnitude of that work as we should. Recall, then, the fact, that the institution of slavery has been the great crucial experiment of our statesmanship for the last half century—nay, since the formation of the Constitution. What to do with this

element in the State—how to treat it—by what means to make the State secure either with it or against it—these have been the questions that have tried and tested all our public men and public measures. All our public men of any note, from the framers of the Constitution down to the men of the present generation, have been obliged to meet the institution of slavery and the questions which it propounded both to their moral sense and their political sagacity. All have felt it to be wrong—have known that its existence was incompatible with a free State and the declarations of liberty which the State had made. Scarcely one has ventured to declare, in express terms, its wrongfulness and the necessity of its extirpation. The advocates of the institution declared it divine, and attempted to prove it so. They defended it against the moral sense of the civilized world. But their very efforts betrayed that they had a latent consciousness that they were in the wrong. For if the institution were right, what need of defence? Those who opposed the institution were not at all prepared to say, when the time came for the expression of their opinion, "Let it be destroyed!" Indeed, the people of the north were divided upon the subject. It had become a partizan power, either controlling the action of parties or decreeing their death. The political leaders of the north were also aspirants for office. Even those who were the ablest among them, and whose fame or influence did not require an elevation to the chief magistracy to give it permanence, were still greedy for power. They thought that power was to be obtained by serving the Institution which yet they could not commend. So, while some professed indifference, others attempted to bridge over the difficulty of their position

by compromise. If others still were moved by their moral sense and the power of conscience, to oppose the Institution even in the face of violence and death, there was always some sinister influence at work which baffled their efforts, and made their opposition of no effect. A mistaken courtesy, a time-serving policy, bitterness of spirit, or pusillanimity of sentiment, or a temperament averse from strife, rendered all attempts abortive, and it seemed as though the nation was to be given over to the delusion that slavery was better than freedom, for the direction of the policy of the Republic. The statesmen of the past had relied too much on the progress of events, and did not wish to cast a stigma upon the conscience of posterity. The Administrations of more recent times have thought that their safety lay in acquiescence, and so they simply and basely capitulated to the power which they deemed irresistible.

It was reserved—wisely reserved, we now can say—for the honest mind and the fearless conscience of Abraham Lincoln to declare the entire truth, and to apply the effectual remedy. "I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect this Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South." That was said at Springfield, Ill., June 17th, 1858. In September, 1859, at Cincinnati, Mr. Lincoln

used the following language: "I think slavery is wrong, morally and politically. I desire that it should be no further spread in these United States, and I should not object if it should gradually terminate in the whole Union." * * * "Whoever desires the prevention of the spread of slavery and the nationalization of that institution, yields all, when he yields to any policy that either recognizes it as being right or as being an indifferent thing. Nothing will make you successful but setting up a policy which shall treat the thing as being wrong." At the close of the very remarkable address which Mr. Lincoln delivered at the Cooper Institute, New York, February 27th, 1860, he expressed himself in this way: "If our sense of duty forbids [us to allow the spread of slavery into the national territories and the free States,] let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances, wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored; contrivances, such as groping for some middle ground between right and the wrong,—vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of 'don't care,' on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals, beseeching true Union men to yield to disunionists,—reversing the divine rule, and calling not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did. Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menace of destruction to the government, or of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to

the end, dare to do our duty, as we understand it." I think that this opinion may be stated briefly thus: "The government of the United States cannot endure half slave, half free. It must be either wholly one or the other. It cannot be all slave. It must be all free. It is the duty of the American people to prevent the one—to accomplish the other."

There is the statement, homely and quaint as it may be, but entire and true. It was declared without bitterness. It was declared without fear. It was declared without distrust. We were accustomed to think it a very harmless statement. We did not understand how pregnant it was with wisdom and with truth. We thought it strange, that the people of the Southern States should be so powerfully wrought up with indignation at such a simple declaration. Why should they resist, even to blood, the election of the man who made it? It was because they saw, more readily than we, that it touched the very heart and marrow of the whole subject. The calmness and deliberation of the statement only made it more forcible. They knew that the man who could reach such a conclusion as that, as the result of the honest convictions of his soul,—who could state it so clearly, and could adhere to it so faithfully,—was neither to be cajoled, nor affrighted, nor moved from his conviction by allurement, threats or force. They knew that they must surrender to the force of his judgment and his will, or that they must destroy the government which was to be administered according to that principle. They madly chose the latter course, and, after four years of unavailing struggle with the patient, inflexible man who impersonated the principle,

were compelled to submit to a government which is hereforth to be wholly free!

Yet Mr. Lincoln, in taking this position, always remembered that, as President of the United States, he was under certain Constitutional obligations. He was determined to save the nation according to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. But he was careful not to allow his emotions to govern his conduct, while his intellect was not clear as to the proper and the right course to pursue. We know that he was fully as earnest for the liberty of the bondman as any man could possibly be; that he was resolute to administer the government in the spirit of justice. To play the part of the Emancipator of a race—dazzling as such an enterprise might be—was still only to be undertaken with the deepest sense of responsibility, and not with any feeling of ambition. Many persons thought that he was slow in coming to the conclusion to issue the Proclamation of Emancipation. So did not I. You know how I counselled patience. You know how fully such patience was rewarded. For when the Proclamation was issued, no word of it had to be re-written. Having satisfied himself that he possessed both the power and the right—feeling all the while, with sensitive finger, the pulse of the people—he placed his name to that sublime production. Then his word was, that he should not "attempt to retract or modify the proclamation." Still later, it was, that if the people desired any retrograde policy, some other, and not he, must be selected to carry out their wishes.

It is to be observed, that Mr. Lincoln adopted the opinions which he held, after the most mature consideration, thus precluding the possibility of their retraction.

It is also to be observed, that he expressed them without the slightest shade of personal animosity. I do not believe that there was the remotest sentiment of vindictiveness or revenge in his nature, nor even—what is the great vice of politicians—of envy or rivalry. We all know that our political discussions are conducted with great asperity and bitterness of feeling on both sides. But I think that we can safely challenge the production of an expression of such sentiments in any of Mr. Lincoln's addresses—numerous as they were, and delivered before excited and excitable popular assemblies. He never seems to have lost his temper; never says a sharp thing for effect; never indulges in personal abuse. It is true, that he often has occasion to correct some misrepresentation, or to refute some slander which his opponents brought against him. But it is always done with such good-humored courtesy and such complete self-command as to show that malice was a stranger to his heart, and ill-nature had no abiding place within him. I do not believe that he ever harbored a single feeling of enmity against any person in the wide world. At all events, he never betrayed the existence of any such feeling amid all the strifes and excitements of the political controversies in which he was engaged.

Particularly is this trait of character to be noticed during the prevalence of our civil war. These internecine strifes are the most prolific of bad and hateful passions. They are the bloodiest strifes in history. When brother arms against brother, the enmity which is aroused is of the very worst and most irreconcilable kind. Mr. Lincoln has been made the object of calumny of the very blackest nature. Yet has he never, in a

single instance, shown a spirit of revenge. All his appeals to the people of the South, both before and after his election, have been of the kindest, as well as of the firmest character. While they, and their sympathizers abroad, heaped upon him the most opprobrious epithets; while they made him the subject of vile caricature and scurrilous jesting; he remained calm, quiet, unruffled, and not to be provoked, in any manner, to an angry remark, or a vindictive replication. Uniformly forbearing to foreign nations, holding out the olive-branch of peace and repeated offer of pardon to his misguided fellow-countrymen, he still would not allow himself the easy satisfaction of vengeance, when his forbearance was met with additional taunts, and his offers of mercy were rejected with scorn. At all times, he preserved that equableness and equanimity of mind, which is the index of a really good and great character. Enmity could not move him from the even balance which he kept. Disaster and defeat could not depress him into undue despondency. Victory could not lift him into unseemly exultation. The sublime faith which he had in Divine Providence wrought in him a calm reliance upon himself. With such completeness of mind and soul, he could well afford to forego the pleasure of revenge, and wait with patience for time and events to prove his wisdom and integrity, to confound his enemies, and establish his good name upon foundations which never could be moved. Nor did he judge wrongly, for time and events did vindicate him, and compelled even those who ridiculed him worst, to say:

"Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
To lame my pencil, and confute my pen,—
To make me own this hind of princes peer,
This rail-splitter, a true-born king of men.

"My shallow judgment I had learnt to rue,
Noting how to occasion's height he rose;
How his quaint wit made home-truth seem more true.
How, iron-like, his temper grew by blows.

"How humble, yet how hopeful he could be;
How in good fortune and in ill the same;
Nor bitter in success, nor boastful he,
Thirsty for gold, nor feverish for fame.

"He went about his work—such work as few
Ever had laid on head and heart and hand—
As one who knows where there's a task to do,
Man's honest will must Heaven's good grace command;

"Who trusts the strength will, with the burden, grow,
That God makes instruments to work His will,
If but that will we can arrive to know,
Nor tamper with the weights of good and ill."

It is to be observed, that our President had great firmness, combined in just proportion with his gentleness of spirit. Said a friend to me, just before Mr. Lincoln's first inauguration: "Have you ever seen the President elect?" "Yes,"—and I mentioned the time, when he addressed a large audience in Railroad Hall, in this city, during his visit to the East, in the early part of 1860. "What is your opinion of him? Has he the requisite firmness for the crisis which is upon the country? Is he like Jackson?" I answered: "Mr. Lincoln is a man thoroughly honest in his convictions, and devoted to what he believes to be right. He may be slow in making up his mind. But when he has once settled upon any point, you may be sure that he will never be moved from it. He will be firm as Jackson, without Jackson's impetuosity." I certainly would claim no prescience or sagacity in such a matter as this, because Mr. Lincoln's character was just as open then as it is now, to any one who chose to study it carefully and without

prejudice. But I have seen no occasion, since that time, for forming any different opinion. Whenever Mr. Lincoln was satisfied he was right, and was doing right, he was inflexibly faithful to his conviction. He would always hear advice—and no man ever had more offered to him. He would always endure what he called the "pressure" of other men's opinions. But he had his own opinions. He convinced himself, and when thus convinced, he took the step which commended itself to his judgment—a step which was seldom or never to be retraced,—and which in the end commended itself as the wisest to the judgment of others.

There was observable in Mr. Lincoln a complete honesty of thought, purpose, utterance and deed. Like the upright man, of whom the Psalmist sings, he spoke "the truth in his heart." His political opponents used to say, when we brought forward this trait in his character, "Oh, yes, he is an honest man, but it requires something more than honesty to govern a State." That is true, but I claim for Mr. Lincoln that he had that "something more." Moreover, I claim, that his honesty of heart and mind clarified his judgment, and increased the real administrative power which he possessed. The honesty that was in his heart did not permit him to say a false or cowardly or mean word, or to do a false, cowardly or mean act. He would not utter his opinions until they were perfectly clear to him as true beyond question. He would not adopt a line of policy until he was positively sure that he could follow it to its results with perfect safety to the public weal. When he was thus sure of himself that he was right, he went on to carry out his convictions. Scarcely one of those convictions was he ever compelled to revise.

He seemed to be rebuilding, piece by piece, the structure of the State, which had been so rudely shaken. Every piece was perfect in its way and its place, till at last, when the work was completed, we looked on with amazement, and said: "Behold, what a master-piece, made by a master hand!" An honest man! Yes. We have begun to understand, that such a man is "the noblest work of God!" It was upon the basis of his native truthfulness that his character was founded. From that basis, it arose strong, stable, secure. He wrought within himself, and in the State, by the plumb-line of truth; and when the toil was finished, it needed no reenforcement or repair.

It has sometimes been objected to Mr. Lincoln, that he did not, in his private intercourse and public bearing, exhibit sufficient dignity of manner or seriousness of speech. Some superficial people said: "We want a gentleman at the head of affairs"—meaning by "gentleman," a courtly, polished man, varnished over by the gloss of manners. It is the charm of the late President's character, that he had no varnish to his honest and sincere integrity. He never pretended to any accomplishment which he did not possess. The people had elected ABRAHAM LINCOLN, and ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the man, they must have for President. His kindliness of heart and his truthfulness of mind manifested far more of the true gentleman than any courtliness of manner could do. We must remember, also, that Mr. Lincoln's jocoseness was partly natural and partly an instrument to serve his own purposes. He was really a grave and serious man, and if he indulged in witticisms at unseasonable moments, it was for the purpose of relieving himself from a burden which would otherwise have be-

come insupportable. But there was another purpose which he had in view. There were times when he was compelled by his position, to give audience to the most impertinent of advisers, and to men who desired, for their own private profit, to gain some knowledge of his plans and purposes. What better method could possibly be devised to dismiss such offensive intruders, than by sending them away no wiser than they came, except by the addition of some anecdote which conveyed to them a mild reproof, while it assured them of the hopelessness of their undertaking? There was still another reason. Sometimes he would stop in the midst of a friendly discussion, to relate a story. But during the relation, he would carry on in his mind two distinct processes—the exercise of memory which was subordinate to another—the reconsideration of the subject under debate and the ascertainment of the next step to be taken. When he had fully satisfied himself as to the best course to pursue, he stopped his anecdote and went on, with unexampled clearness, to develop the point which he had been thinking out. All the while that he was telling his story he was gauging his man. There is this also to be noticed, that Mr. Lincoln's jocoseness had more wisdom than most men's gravest thoughts.

What was the result of the application of such a character to questions of administration and the policy of government? It was to achieve a complete success in the midst of the most trying and the severest difficulties. A civil war presents to an ambitious ruler the most favorable opportunity for self-aggrandizement, in the name of patriotism. He can, if he chooses, destroy the liberties of his country, for the assumed sake of preserving his country. He may act the despot. He may

set aside the laws and the Constitution, on the plea of military necessity. He may secure his appointment as sole dictator, or he may snatch imperial authority from the people, by a *coup d'etat*. He may make himself a Cæsar or a Napoleon, on the shallow pretext, that it is "to trace out to peoples the paths they ought to follow." It is possible that during the prevalence of the rebellion, there were some among us who wished that the contest would develop some one man of the type of Cæsar or Napoleon, whose supreme will should become the director of the public sentiment and the public policy. The contest did develop such a man, but of a higher type. Mr. Lincoln turned away from every temptation to make the Presidential chair a throne. He regarded himself as at all times responsible to God, and to the people who had elected him their ruler. He preserved the Constitution inviolate, seeking only to amend it in the proper, the prescribed way. He obeyed the laws. He referred his authority to the people, and calmly awaited their verdict upon his course. When that verdict was one of approval, he assumed office once more, with even a profounder sense of responsibility and duty, if possible; and in that most solemn and affecting of State-papers,—his last inaugural address,—he laid open his heart to the world, as that of a man whose only ends were the performance of his duty, the security of his country's welfare, and the service of his God. So powerfully, by the exhibition of such characteristics, had he wrought upon the minds of his countrymen, that they had all the benefits of Cæsarism without any of its evils. So completely had he gathered up all our confidence and trust, that we bowed to his decisions and to his will with unquestioning obe-

dience. We felt that he was always right and always wise. If, at any time, we had become impatient, or if we questioned his sagacity, we had only to wait to perceive how much more faithful and wise he was than we. He was a Cæsar without a Cæsar's ambition. In him, the American idea, which he embodied and expressed, was proved to be better than any idea Napoleonic. For it was his will, exercised in his true and honest way, by which, as has been happily expressed by an English writer, "he had risen gradually above circumstances, till his enemies denounced him as an autocrat,—till his ministers became clerks, his generals instruments, his envoys agents to carry out his commands. When once resolved on his course, no politicians ventured to dictate to him, no general to disobey him, no state to lock the wheels of the machine. In the end, he said once, 'the decision must rest with me;' and the people had learned to know that it was best that it should so rest." Thus he carried us through the conflict, without endangering for a moment the liberties of the people, and at the end, no loyal man had just cause of complaint of his public measures. He really preserved the Republic, and even made it stronger than ever before. The purest patriot himself, he trained the people to as pure a loyalty. So well had he educated us in the school of self-government, over which he has presided, that, when his life was taken, filling all our hearts with untold sorrow, the shock of his death did not so much as jar the delicate and complicated machinery of our institutions. He crushed a gigantic rebellion; he brought a civil war of unexampled magnitude to an end, and he left his country stronger, freer and better than when he assumed the rule.

Consider what the result has been with his opponents and enemies. We have been told that the Southern leaders were the fittest of all for government. They were trained to politics and arms from childhood. They assumed to be the born rulers of the American State. A long career of official life had familiarized them with all public affairs. We have even been told by the degenerate lips of Northern men, that they exhibited a superior refinement, generosity and chivalry. They certainly professed to have a superior astuteness and ability, and their pretensions to be the aristocracy of the country were absolutely insufferable. Yet with all this skill in governing, this experience in affairs, this prescriptive right to rule, this pretended dignity and pre-eminence, they have been utterly defeated and humiliated, by the simple, unpractised, but sincere, honest and persistent man of the people, the genuine representative of the true democracy of the north. Never has there been a finer illustration of the manner in which virtue vindicates its supremacy, and proves that there is nothing which it cannot conquer. Jefferson Davis, with all his accomplishments in politics, his subtlety, his state-craft and his unscrupulous ability, has been proved, by the relentless logic of events, to be no match for the unpretending, simple-hearted, conscientious integrity of ABRAHAM LINCOLN. The politicians of the South, born to fight and to govern! They have strained every nerve, exhausted every resource, tried every expedient, and yet they have completely, ingloriously failed,—the last act in the drama of the rebellion, changing, like the scenes of a theatre, from the darkest tragedy to the broadest farce. One miserable fallacy at least has been exposed before the eye of every

observer, and the last pæan has, I think, been sung to the ability, the statesmanship, the heroism, the chivalry of the South.

Consider what the result has been with the hostile opinions of the enemies of the American Republic abroad. The character of our people has never been so completely misappreciated, nor so grossly misrepresented, in Europe, as during the prevalence of the rebellion. The London *Times*, which has never been fair towards us, followed by its appropriate retinue, has frequently indulged in predictions of our ruin, which as frequently have been falsified. The Continental press, with a few honorable exceptions, has never failed to magnify every temporary reverse, and to cast the sympathies of the people whom it represented, into the scale of the rebellion's cause. No opportunity for throwing reproach upon us has been lost. Every success has been depreciated. Every humane measure has been derided. But the day of success came, and the voice of detraction was hushed. Gradually the clouds that had gathered about us dispersed. The light shone in upon the minds of those whom prejudice and antipathy had blinded. The true greatness of our Ruler became slowly manifest even to the most unfriendly eyes. When the intelligence of his death reached Europe, but one voice of commendation arose, and the journals of the old world confessed that they had mistaken and undervalued the man. The English House of Lords—the very seat and centre of the aristocracy of Europe—disregarded all precedent, and voted an address of sympathy and condolence to the American government. The "plain backwoodsman," "the village-lawyer, of Illinois," as they used to call him, had conquered.

Here is the chief triumph of all. It is the triumph of the simple manhood of ABRAHAM LINCOLN over the prejudices of centuries, and the traditions of the most conventional of aristocracies. Let no one say, henceforth, that character has no power. Look upon this wonderful miracle which it has performed, and acknowledge its empire!

I have forborne to illustrate the different points which I have made, by quotations from Mr. Lincoln's speeches and State papers, because, had I allowed myself to make such extracts, I should hardly have known where to stop. Mr. Lincoln's style is peculiarly felicitous and lucid, though it may sometimes violate the technical rules of rhetoric. There is something fascinating about his writings and his published addresses. Everywhere they exhibit the same peculiar characteristics, everywhere we see the same sagacity of mind, the same clearness of perception, the same carefulness and truthfulness of utterance. Before his election to the Presidency he was well known, at the West, as one of the most forcible and effective speakers that ever addressed a public audience. His famous debate with Mr. Douglas,—in which he showed himself certainly the equal of that accomplished debater in all the qualities of popular oratory, and greatly his superior in temper and courtesy, and even power of argument,—made him better known than before throughout the country. But that which made him most prominent before the people of this section of the land, was the very statesmanlike and conclusive address which he delivered at the Cooper Institute, on the 27th of February, 1860. There is in this address a wealth of political knowledge truly marvellous. I doubt, if any address of a similar character, delivered

within the last quarter of a century by any of our public men, can surpass it in this respect. An edition of this address was published at the time, under the supervision of two competent gentlemen, who express in the preface, their great surprise at the manifest labor, research and fidelity of its author, both in his selections and his omissions. Without a single instance of parade in learning, Mr. Lincoln, in delivering a political speech, really produced a historical work of the greatest value. "A single, easy, simple sentence, of plain Anglo-Saxon words," say the editors, "contains a chapter of history that, in some instances, has taken days of labor to verify, and which must have cost the author months of investigation to acquire." The Messages, Proclamations, and addresses produced during the Presidency of Mr. Lincoln, are already too familiar to require comment. The three most prominent of these productions, the Proclamation of Emancipation, which delivered a whole race from bondage; his address at Gettysburg, which ranks well with the finest utterances of classic eloquence; his last Inaugural address, which breathed a spirit of piety and faith that touched all christian hearts throughout the land, and even throughout the world, will make his name and memory fragrant for centuries to come. Mr. Lincoln, by his course in office and his broad statesmanship, has gradually mounted, step by step, to his place in history as one of the wisest and certainly the most beneficent of our rulers. He never desired war. He hoped to avert it. But when it came, he accepted it; still striving to diminish its horrors, and make it as humane as the circumstances would allow. When the proper time came, he issued his Proclamation of Emancipation—not too

soon, certainly not too late. At four different times he offered honorable terms to the insurgents, which they as often rejected. His last thoughts were devoted to the subject of pacification, in such a way, as to make it not too galling to the humiliated foe, and to secure the permanent welfare of the country. He was magnanimous alike to friend and enemy, and it appears as though the South, in its blind madness, had stricken down its best benefactor. The days of mourning will come to the South, in the mansions of the planters, as well as in the cabins of the freedmen, that so vile a murder has been perpetrated upon so good and wise a man.

He has died—not to himself alone. He has died, and humanity accepts the sacrifice and mourns for its necessity, but accepts it as the surety of deliverance from many a woe. He lived to "see of the travail of his soul," and was "satisfied." He has done his work faithfully and well. A nation weeps his departure as it feels the greatness of its bereavement. The civilized world expresses its sympathy. The powers and peoples of Europe vie with one another in doing honor to his memory. A martyr to the great cause of human freedom, he is embalmed forever in the grateful esteem of mankind. He has died for duty, for truth, for the welfare of man, in the faithful service of God. Yet dying so, he lives forever.

We must accept the conclusion, that his work, so far as his bodily strength and presence in the world are concerned, was completed. I do not agree, however, with those who complacently say, that we needed a sterner and stronger hand than his to perform the labor of reconstruction, and the necessary acts of justice. With all my respect for the present Chief Magistrate,

I do not believe that he is a wiser, or a juster, or a firmer man than Mr. Lincoln. I do not believe that reconstruction will be made any easier, or that justice will be more faithfully administered. Mr. Lincoln had the rare faculty of doing justice without the slightest particle of revenge. It is precisely that which we should now be taught. This great Republic—acknowledged now to be one of the three most powerful States of the world—must do nothing in the spirit of vengeance. It must occupy that high position, which—even in inflicting merited punishment upon the authors of its wrongs—shall not be sullied, before the eye of God and man, by a single passionate or vindictive deed. Its moral power must be as conspicuous as its material. Mr. Lincoln, above all others, was the man to educate us and lead us up to that high plane of national life. Neither do we need to show a threatening aspect to foreign nations. The peace of the world, for the years to come, lies in the charge of the American Republic. Whenever we choose to speak the word, the desolations of war will fall upon the earth. But the word which, I trust, this nation will speak forevermore, is: "The Republic, it is Peace." Who was better fitted than Mr. Lincoln to speak it? No! do not say that we needed some one else. I believe that he, who was so wise and true and just amid so many difficulties, and who was so successful in every trial of administration, would have proved himself equal to any and every emergency of the State—equally wise, true, just and successful. As he has led us through the past, so would he have led us through the future. Had God seen fit to thwart the assassin's aim and spare the President's life, he would have retired to his quiet home in Illinois, at the

close of his official term, followed by the blessings of a nation which he had redeemed, and the respect of a world which had learned to honor his greatness!

We know now how such sacrifices as he and our fellow countrymen have made, work out a national triumph. The intelligence that has come to us during the last few days has assured us that the rebellion has been crushed, that peace has come, and that order and good government will henceforth prevail among us. Great troubles, indeed, we have had. Great losses have we suffered. Great labors have we performed. We shall now be able to reap the reward of our fidelity. It is a source of some satisfaction, both to me and to you, to feel, that throughout the course of this struggle, we have here occupied no doubtful position, and have indulged in no despondent or distrustful thoughts. The instructions from this pulpit, in common with the pulpits of our Unitarian churches, with one or two exceptions, have always been, I am glad now to say, hopeful, encouraging, and loyal. I cannot now recall any spoken or written word which expressed any want of confidence, at any time, in the members of the Government, or the commanders of our armies, with but a single exception. It has been my constant aim to lend my support to the measures which have been adopted for the preservation of the Republic. It has sometimes become my duty to rebuke that captious and fault-finding spirit which has occasionally made itself manifest in this community. I am glad to know that here we have given no uncertain sound. Why have I thus spoken? It has been because I believed in the power of civilization, humanity and truth; because I believed in the Providence of God, who does not permit

the wrong to triumph. Then it has been because I believed in the principles of liberty and union, which the fathers of the Republic pronounced; because I believed in the fidelity and loyalty of the American people; because I believed, in the very inmost part of my soul, in the wisdom, the patriotism, and the ability of him whom the people had chosen for their leader. I believed—therefore have I spoken!

Though that leader has gone away from us, yet we cannot have lost his guidance. The work which he had prosecuted so well will still go forward to its perfect result. He destroyed the institution of slavery. It is for us to expel from our hearts and minds those prejudices of race and color which make slavery possible. The State will free itself from every fetter; will effectually wipe out every vestige of barbarism and slavery which may now exist; will go on in its career of national virtue and national greatness, till it shall crown the summit, and the light of its glory shall shine over all the world. The nations shall come to its light, and humanity to the brightness of its rising. Then, in that consummate hour, when the people shall examine the long list of worthy men, to find the name of him, to whom they owe the most, and whom they love the best, their grateful eyes will rest with one accord upon the name, side by side with that of Washington himself—the name of this "king of men," ABRAHAM LINCOLN!

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